



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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No. 16.

NEW YORK, APRIL 19, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS PUZZLED; OR THE TORIES' CLEVER SCHEME. BY HARRY MOORE.



"My boy," said General Washington, "it is unnecessary for me to tell you how valuable these papers are, or how important it is that you should safely deliver them. Go, now, and God bless you."

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CHAPTER I.

THE BRITISH REFUSE TO FIGHT.

There was great excitement in the camp of the patriot army at Middlebrook, N. J.

There was great joy as well.

The "Liberty Boys," aided by four other companies, had captured nearly half a regiment of British soldiers.

The British had made a feint to throw the patriots off their guard.

This feint had consisted of a movement by half a regiment toward New York.

But it had not fooled General Washington at all.

He knew it was but a device intended to veil the real purpose of the main army—which was to move across New Jersey and on toward Philadelphia—and he had sent Dick Slater, captain of the company of "Liberty Boys," in command of the five hundred patriot soldiers, and they had set a trap for the British and had caught them in it.

The British had been at New Brunswick, distant ten miles from Middlebrook, for several months, and General Howe, the British commander, had seemed to be undecided what to do.

Dick Slater had gone into the British encampment, however, and had overheard a council of war, in which it was decided to move on Philadelphia on this day of which we write—the 12th of June.

The decoy soldiers had been sent out early in the morning and had been captured, and this had doubtless cast a damper on the spirits of the British, for at ten o'clock they had not yet started to move toward Philadelphia.

That they would make the start, however, General Washington did not doubt, and he was now making preparations to checkmate the move.

All was bustle and confusion.

But there was method even amidst the confusion.

The soldiers were alert and eager.

They had been cooped up in camp for several months, and they were eager to be up and doing.

The wonderful success of the trap set by the "Liberty Boys" enthused all.

The other soldiers were anxious to get out and have the chance to duplicate the wonderful work of Dick Slater's little band.

And among them, none were more alert and eager than the members of Dick's company of "Liberty Boys"—a company of youths of an average of eighteen years.

At last the order was given to move.

The army of about seven thousand men started at once. It made a magnificent spectacle.

At the head of the army rode the commander-in-chief on a splendid charger that had been presented to him by Dick Slater, who had captured it from the British while on one of his spying expeditions.

The army moved southward and crossed the Raritan River.

There was heavy timber along the Raritan.

So the army had to string out, like some monster serpent, as the road through the timber was narrow.

A couple of miles farther south, however, the army reached the edge of the timber.

General Washington had sent Dick and two or three others ahead as scouts, to see if they could see anything of the enemy.

While yet the army was half a mile from the point where the open country would be reached, Dick and his companions returned.

They reported to the commander-in-chief that they had seen nothing of the enemy.

This was pleasing information.

It would give the patriot army a chance to get in position before the appearance of the British.

As they reached the edge of the timber and began marching out onto the plain beyond, the front of the British column came into view, also emerging from the timber.

A cheer went up from the patriot soldiers.

They were happy, now.

A battle seemed to be at hand.

That there would be an encounter seemed unavoidable. But "there is many a slip," etc.

The British saw the Americans at the same time that the Americans saw them.

The two armies were about a mile apart.

But the British came to a stop.

The patriots saw this with wonderment.

What could it mean?

Why had the British stopped.

Surely they were not afraid?

They had nearly, if not twice the number of men that General Washington had.

They should be able to win in a battle.

General Washington supposed that the halt would be only temporary.

His idea was that word was being taken to General Howe or Cornwallis that the "rebel" army was in sight.

This, of course, would cause the army to remain at a standstill for awhile.

So he began making such disposition of his forces as he thought best.

The commander-in-chief was determined to show battle.

He knew just how his men felt.

They had been cooped up half the winter, and until the present time.

They were eager to get into action.

A battle would be a welcome diversion.

Even should his army get the worst of an encounter, General Washington felt that it was necessary he should offer battle.

His men would have been terribly disappointed had he refused to do so.

So he made up his mind to offer battle.

But the men were to be disappointed.

To tell the plain truth, Generals Howe and Cornwallis were actually afraid of Washington.

The wonderful feat, when he had on Christmas night crossed the Delaware with his little force and captured Trenton, and made prisoners of one thousand Hessians; and then when he had later on outwitted Cornwallis and escaped from the trap set for him and moved on Princeton, and captured the garrison and stores, and then had gone on and taken up an impregnable position at Morristown Heights, had caused them to have not only a wholesome respect for the wonderful military genius of Washington, but as we have said, they were actually afraid of him.

They did not know what he might be capable of doing, now that he had eight thousand men under his command.

And while Washington and his army were waiting for the British to advance, Howe and Cornwallis were holding a council.

They did not know what to do.

They had already lost five hundred men that morning.

They did not wish to lose any more.

They did not know how strong a force Washington might have.

They rather overestimated the size of his army.

They felt that they would be taking grave risks in advancing and engaging in battle.

They discussed the question pro and con.

They called the other staff officers into the council, and the matter was discussed from every standpoint.

They did not know what to do.

They knew that their men were eager to go forward.

They wished to get revenge for the catastrophe which had befallen their comrades that morning.

But Howe and Cornwallis were afraid a still greater disaster might overtake them if they offered battle now.

So they hesitated and pondered the question.

At last they decided to postpone the move on Philadelphia temporarily and return to New Brunswick.

The order was given to right-about face and march back in the direction from which they had come.

The men could scarcely believe their ears.

They had expected nothing of this kind.

They wished to go forward.

They were as eager for battle, perhaps, as were the patriot soldiers.

They obeyed orders, but they grumbled audibly.

They turned sullenly and moved slowly and reluctantly back toward New Brunswick.

As for Generals Washington and Greene, and indeed all the patriot officers and soldiers, they were greatly surprised.

The men especially were disappointed.

They hoped to engage in a battle, but now they were to be disappointed.

They could not understand it.

"They seem to be afraid to offer battle, your excellency," said General Greene to the commander-in-chief.

"It really seems so, General Greene," was the reply.

"Our men will be greatly disappointed."

"Yes, but," lowering his voice, "I am not sorry, as the British outnumber us two to one, and it would be a difficult matter to hold our own against them."

"So it would."

"I was willing to offer battle on account of the fact that I know the men are eager for action."

"True; they have been inactive so long that they no doubt wish for something of an exciting nature to take the place of the dulness of camp life."

"Perhaps the retreat is only a pretense to deceive us, your excellency," said one of the staff officers.

"That might be the case," said Washington.

"Yes, indeed," said General Greene.

"I will send scouts to observe the actions of the British," said the commander-in-chief.

"Then we will not return to Middlebrook at once?" said General Greene.

"No; we will first make sure that the retreat of the British is bona fide."

General Washington detailed Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook, his nearest friend and comrade, and two other soldiers to go on the scouting expedition.

"Follow the British," he ordered, "and see what they are doing. We wish to know whether or not the retreat is real, or only a feint. Be careful, however, and do not fall into a trap of any kind. They may try to ambush you."

"Very well, your excellency," replied Dick.

Then he and his three companions rode away at a gallop.

A ride of a few minutes brought them to the edge of the timber at the point where the British had been when seen, and from which point they had retreated.

There was a road there, leading toward New Brunswick.

The four entered the road and made their way along at a gallop.

They wished to sight the rear of the British column as quickly as possible, then they would follow at a leisurely pace and watch the redcoats. When satisfied that the retreat was genuine, and that the British were going back to New Brunswick, they would return and so report to General Washington.

Dick and his companions felt that they were taking some chances.

The British could easily have left some men behind, who could be hidden in the woods at the side of the road.

Then, as the four came riding along, it would be an easy matter to shoot them down.

So all four kept their eyes open.

They looked searchingly into the timber at the sides of the road.

They did not wish to run into an ambush.

But they did so, just the same.

Suddenly a dozen redcoats rose up at the right-hand side of the road.

A like number rose up on the left-hand side.

They held leveled muskets in their hands.

"Fire!" yelled one who seemed to be in command.

Dick and his three companions dropped forward on the necks of their horses as quick as a flash.

Crash!

The reports of the firearms made an almost deafening noise, there in the timber.

CHAPTER II.

A LEAP FOR LIBERTY.

The bullets whistled all around the four.

One of the men gave utterance to a gasp and fell off his horse to the ground.

"I'm done for, boys!" he said faintly.

The horse the other man was mounted on whirled in affright and galloped madly back down the road.

But Dick and Bob did not turn and attempt to flee.

They thought they stood a better chance of escaping by taking a bolder course.

They put spurs to their horses and rode forward at as swift a pace as they could make the animals go.

Each managed to draw a pistol, and crack, crack! went the weapons.

A couple of the redcoats gave utterance to cries of pain and fell to the ground.

Then the youths passed through between the two bodies of soldiers, and went tearing up the road at a terrific pace.

The redcoats gave utterance to shouts of rage and curses. They were very angry.

They had expected to bring down all four of the "rebels," and had brought down only one.

Not only that, but two of their number were badly wounded.

There was good reason for their anger.

They leaped back within the shadow of the timber.

A few moments later they reappeared, leading horses. They mounted the horses.

Then they set out in pursuit of Dick and Bob.

The youths saw this.

"We are in for it, Dick," said Bob.

"It looks like it, old man."

"We will soon be between two fires."

"True; we will soon be within sight of the rear of the British column, and it won't take us long to catch up with the redcoats."

"We don't want to do that!"

"No!"

"What shall we do, then?"

"We will have to take to the timber, I guess."

"That will be the best thing to do, I think."

The youths kept on for the present, however.

They looked back frequently and saw that they were holding their own with their pursuers.

So there was no immediate need of taking to the timber.

They would wait till they came in sight of the rear end of the British column before doing so.

Presently they sighted the British.

They kept on, even after that, till they were within half a mile of the redcoats.

Then they decided to seek safety in the recesses of the woods.

They suddenly slackened the speed of their horses.

Then they left the road and entered the timber.

The pursuing redcoats uttered shouts as they witnessed this maneuver.

Doubtless they had been expecting some such move on the part of the fugitives.

As the youths entered the timber they gave a backward glance.

They saw the redcoats were lashing their horses to renewed exertions.

"Do you suppose they will try to follow us, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I should not be surprised, Bob."

"Well, let 'em. They can't catch us."

"I think not, Bob."

The youths could not make very rapid progress now.

The trees were thick, and then there was considerable underbrush.

Presently they struck what seemed to be a sort of path, however.

They followed it.

This made the going somewhat easier.

And they could go more rapidly, too.

The increase in speed, however, was only the difference between a slow and a fast walk.

The horses could neither trot nor gallop.

The youths did not mind, however.

They felt reasonably secure.

The redcoats, even if they pursued them into the depths of the timber, could not make any better speed than they were making.

Consequently the redcoats could not overtake them.

At least, so figured Dick and Bob.

They did not know it, of course, but they were riding into a trap.

It was not a trap of any one's setting.

It was one of Nature's traps.

Presently the path came to an ending.

It was at a little glade.

There was a little stream running through the glade.

This explained the existence of the path.

It had been made by animals which came here to drink in the stream.

The youths hardly knew which way to go.

The glade seemed surrounded by a thicket.

At the opposite side, however, the underbrush was not so thick.

The youths made their way across and rode onward through the timber.

They thought that they had heard sounds from the rear, on one or two occasions.

This made them think that the redcoats were still pursuing them.

This was the case, as they soon discovered.

Presently they rode into what seemed to be a sort of defile.

The ground began to slope upward on both sides.

Even in the defile which they were following it sloped upward quite a good deal.

The defile extended onward a distance of nearly half a mile.

It wound and crooked around like the trail of a huge serpent.

If the youths were pursued, their pursuers might be within a couple of hundred yards of them, and they not be aware of the fact.

The sides of the defile were very steep—almost straight up and down, in fact.

"Where are we getting to, anyway, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I hardly know, Bob. I have never been in this part of the country before, and it is new to me."

Bob gave an uneasy glance back over his shoulder.

"Jove! what if the redcoats were following us, Dick?" he said; "if they should close up on us, we would be in a fix, for there would be no getting away."

"No way save by going straight ahead."

"And we might not be able to do that."

"Oh, I don't think there is any danger as regards that, Bob."

But they soon found that there was danger of that very thing.

They suddenly came out to the end of the defile.

And what was their surprise to find that it ended at a stream of considerable size.

"It must be the Raritan," said Dick.

"So it is, I think, Dick; but—how are we going to go any farther?"

This was the question.

Where the defile ended, the youths found themselves to be at least twenty feet above the water of the stream.

There was no chance to get out to the right or to the left, for the sides of the defile rose straight up, a distance of twenty-five feet, at least.

"We'll have to go back, Bob," said Dick.

Bob glanced back apprehensively.

"We had better hurry, then, Dick," he said. "What if the redcoats have been following us? We would be caught in a trap, sure."

"So we would, Bob. I don't think they have followed us this far, however."

But they had, for even as he spoke around a bend in the defile rode the redcoats.

"Great guns! there they come, Dick!" gasped Bob.

"Sure enough!" said Dick, in a grim tone of voice.

The redcoats uttered shouts of joy.

Then they rode forward at a trot.

When they were within twenty paces of the youths they stopped and leveled their muskets.

"Surrender!" cried the commander; "surrender or die!"

But Dick and Bob had been taking a survey of the situation as the redcoats were approaching.

They had looked down at the water of the stream, twenty feet below.

Then they had looked questioningly at each other.

"Shall we risk it, Bob?" asked Dick.

"Just as you say," was Bob's reply.

"I say let's risk it, then. Better death than capture!"

So when the redcoats leveled their muskets and cried out for the youths to surrender they did not obey the command.

Instead, Dick said, "Now!" in a low, tense tone of voice, and at the word both youths drove the spurs into the flanks of the horses, and the noble animals, rendered desperate by the pain, leaped downward toward the water, twenty feet below.

CHAPTER III.

THE YOUTHS' ESCAPE.

The redcoats gave utterance to yells of surprise and anger.

At the same instant they fired their muskets.

They were too late, however.

The horses and riders had disappeared.

The sensations experienced by the two youths as they shot downward were not particularly pleasant ones.

They did not know but that they might be going to their death.

The time was so brief, however, between the moment of leaping from the ledge at the end of the defile, and the moment of striking the water, that they did not have time to feel very much frightened.

It seemed but an instant of time after leaving the ledge when they struck the water.

They struck with a great splash.

They felt the water splash up in their faces.

They also heard the yells of the redcoats, and the crash of the muskets as they were fired off.

It happened that the horses struck the river at a point where the water was quite deep.

The horses went clear under.

The youths were submerged to their waists.

Then the horses came up.

Urged by the youths, the frightened animals swam rapidly toward the other bank of the river.

The youths still had their wits about them.

They realized that the redcoats would rush to the end of the defile and open fire upon them with their small arms.

So their only safety lay in getting to the opposite shore as quickly as possible.

The river luckily was not wide.

It was perhaps a hundred feet, no more.

The horses could swim this distance very quickly.

The youths urged the horses to renewed exertions.

They reached the other shore just at the same instant the redcoats reached the ledge at the end of the defile.

The redcoats uttered shouts as they saw the youths riding up out of the water.

They drew their pistols and fired a volley.

Warned by the shouts, the youths had put spurs to the horses, and they entered the timber just as the redcoats fired.

The redcoats fired hastily.

They did not stop to take aim.

The result was that the bullets went wide.

One or two came close, but none struck the youths or their horses.

In another moment they had spurred the horses forward and had penetrated far enough into the timber so that they were in no danger from more shots.

The two brave youths looked at each other.

"That was a close call, old man," said Bob.

"Yes, it was for a fact, Bob," replied Dick.

"Closer than I like."

"I don't fancy such close shaves myself."

"Say, that was a big old leap down into the river from that ledge," said Bob.

"Yes, indeed."

"I wouldn't have believed the horses would jump off there, would you?"

"They would not have done so, Bob, had we not forced them to do so."

"That's right, they wouldn't—and I don't know as I would have blamed them had they refused to make the leap."

"Nor should I."

The youths now considered themselves out of danger.

The Raritan River was between them and their enemies.

They were confident the redcoats would not make the leap down into the river, as they had done.

They had no such incentive to do so.

Of course, the redcoats would have liked to have captured the youths, but they would not risk their lives in order to do so.

Life was too precious for that.

And the youths were right.

The British soldiers, after bewailing their ill luck in failing to capture the "rebels," turned about and made

their way back to the road, and rode onward to rejoin the main army.

Dick and Bob continued on through the timber.

They must keep on till they struck the road.

Then they would make their way back to the army, and make their report.

They were convinced that the British were retiring to New Brunswick.

Their move was not merely a feint.

They certainly wished to avoid a battle with the patriot army.

The youths finally reached a road.

They turned southward and rode away in the direction of the patriot army.

An hour later they arrived there.

They found General Washington looking very sober, but when he saw the youths his face lighted up.

"One of the men who went away with you returned some time ago," the commander-in-chief explained, "and he said that his comrade was killed and that you were no doubt captured, as your horses had run away, carrying you right toward the British army."

"We did have rather a close call, your excellency," said Dick.

Then he briefly related their adventures.

"And you think the British army will return to New Brunswick, then?" he asked.

"There is no doubt regarding the matter, your excellency," replied Dick; "it was not merely a feint."

To make sure, however, the commander-in-chief sent out Dick and Bob again, to make another survey of the situation.

Their clothes were dry by this time, and they were experiencing no ill effects from their impromptu bath in the Raritan.

They rode away and were gone two hours.

When they returned they brought the patriot soldier who had fallen off his horse, wounded, when the four were fired upon when they first went on their scouting expedition.

The man was seriously wounded.

But not necessarily fatally.

It was bringing him back that had delayed their return.

They had been forced to travel very slowly to keep from jolting him and aggravating the pain from his wound.

Dick and Bob reported that there were no signs of the British.

"They have certainly returned to New Brunswick," said Dick.

Then the commander-in-chief gave the order for the patriot army to move back toward Middlebrook.

This the army did.

The men were greatly disappointed, however.

They had expected to get into action.

And now to have to return without having done so was galling.

There was no help for it, however.

The British had declined to enter into battle, and that settled it.

The patriot soldiers could not fight when they had nobody to fight with.

The march back to Middlebrook was slow.

It was just sundown when they reached their encampment.

They returned to the quarters they had left only a few hours before.

The evening meal was prepared and eaten.

Then the men gathered in groups to talk over the disappointment of the day.

The "Liberty Boys" were talking the matter over, too, the same as were the other soldiers.

They were greatly disappointed, also.

But they had not so much to complain of as the other men.

They had been pretty active all through the winter months, and during the spring months also.

While they were talking, an orderly approached and spoke to Dick Slater.

"The commander-in-chief wishes to see you at headquarters," he said.

"Tell him I will be there at once," said Dick.

The orderly bowed and withdrew.

"More work and adventure for Dick, I'll wager," said Bob; "I wish the commander-in-chief had as much work for me as he has for Dick."

Dick laughed and withdrew.

He went at once to the headquarters of the commander-in-chief.

"I am puzzled to know the meaning of the move of the British in returning to New Brunswick to-day, Dick," General Washington said; "and I have sent for you to see if you thought you could find out for me."

Dick's face flushed with pleasure.

He was never so happy as when doing some special work of this kind for the commander-in-chief.

"I will try to find out what it means, if you wish me to, your excellency," said Dick, quietly.

"Very well, and thank you, Dick. I do wish it, very much. And I hope you will find out, too, as the movements

of the British are very puzzling. It is hard work figuring out what their intentions are."

"I will find out the meaning of their movements as quickly as possible, your excellency; and will report as soon as I learn anything of importance."

"Very good, my boy. You will depart on your errand at once?"

"At once, your excellency."

Dick saluted and withdrew.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE REDCOAT RANKS.

Half an hour later two horsemen rode out of the patriot camp and away into the darkness.

The horsemen were Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook.

Dick had decided to take Bob along, as he might wish to send him back with a message to the commander-in-chief before he himself would be ready to return.

They were, of course, bound for the encampment of the British at New Brunswick.

They had been over the road often enough so that they were familiar with all the crooks and turns.

An hour and a half of brisk riding brought them to a point within a mile of New Brunswick.

"I think we had better conceal our horses in the timber, Bob," said Dick, "and walk the rest of the way. What do you think?"

"I think as you do on all subjects, save the one of which is the prettier girl, Edith Slater or Alice Estabrook, Dick. You think Alice is, while I am as confident that Edith is the prettier and sweeter of the two—eh, old man?" and Bob chuckled.

Dick laughed.

"I suppose it is natural that a fellow should think some other fellow's sister prettier and sweeter than his own, Bob," he said; "and speaking of the girls, wouldn't you like to see them?"

"I certainly would, Dick."

Dick and Bob had lived neighbors to each other all their lives.

Their homes were near Tarrytown, in the State of New York, and were within less than a quarter of a mile of each other.

The youths had gone to school together, had fished, hunted, and swam together—had been together almost constantly, in fact, and this had been the ease with their sis-

ters, Edith Slater and Alice Estabrook. The girls were beautiful, sweet, and attractive, and it was not strange, perhaps, that the youths had fallen in love with each other's sister.

And this was what Bob had reference to.

They talked of the girls while tying their horses, and then as they entered the road and started on their walk toward New Brunswick they became silent.

They were entering upon a dangerous undertaking now, and silence was necessary to their safety.

They might run upon pickets at any moment.

As they drew near to New Brunswick, the youths became aware of the fact that something unusual was going on.

When they had entered the town—they having managed to evade the pickets—they found the place astir.

There was great hurrying hither and thither, and hoarse commands could be heard, as they were given utterance to by the British officers.

"I wonder what's up, anyway?" remarked Bob, in Dick's ear.

"I don't know for certain," said Dick; "but I think I can guess."

"What does it mean, then, do you think, Dick?"

"I think the British are getting ready to move toward Philadelphia once more, Bob!"

"Do you think so, Dick?"

"Yes; they think to fool General Washington. They retreated back to New Brunswick to-day; that was to throw him off his guard. Now they are going to make the start, in the hope of getting clear away from him before morning."

"I see."

"But they must not be allowed to succeed, Bob."

"Of course not, Dick."

"We will make sure that this is what they are going to try to do, and then, if it proves to be the case, you must return at once and inform the commander-in-chief of what is taking place."

"All right, Dick; and then our army can get ahead of the British again, as they did to-day."

"Yes."

The youths made further investigations, made some cautious inquiries, found that Dick's idea was correct, and then Bob started back to where they had left their horses.

Dick had given him instructions.

He was to ride to Middlebrook at the best speed of his horse and inform Washington regarding what was taking place.

Dick decided to remain in New Brunswick.

He thought that he might learn something of interest and value by remaining.

As far as he knew, the British army would not be ready to move short of two hours yet.

This would give Bob time to reach Middlebrook—and more, too.

Dick had a couple of British uniforms which he had secured on different occasions when in the British lines, and he and Bob had donned these uniforms before starting to New Brunswick.

So Dick felt reasonably secure in walking about the streets.

He was not much afraid of being detected.

There was so much confusion his danger was even less.

Dick walked here and there.

He listened to the talk of the men.

Occasionally he overheard the exchange of words between two or more officers.

Everything he heard tended to prove that the British were going to do exactly what he had suspected they were going to do.

He was glad he and Bob had got there in time.

He was very glad that he had brought Bob along.

It made it possible to get the news of the intentions of the British to General Washington, and still Dick was enabled to remain to play the part of a spy on the British.

Dick made it a point to remain near the headquarters of Generals Howe and Cornwallis.

He knew that here was where the orders would emanate from.

Officers were coming and going from the building almost constantly.

Dick made it a point to follow the officers as they came forth from the building, after their conference with the generals, and listen to their conversation.

He picked up a number of bits of interesting and important information in this manner.

He felt that he was doing very well, indeed.

If he was not suspected and discovered, he might learn a great deal that would be of benefit to the patriot cause.

He was returning, after having followed a couple of officers, when he met a couple of more officers coming from the headquarters.

Dick intended to drop in behind those two, as he had been doing, but he was destined to be treated to a surprise.

As he met the two, one halted and said in a severe tone of voice:

"What are you doing here, Simkins? You are trying to get drunk again, are you? Fall in behind and follow me straight back to your company."

Dick was almost paralyzed.

He had been mistaken for a soldier in this officer's company.

He had been ordered to "fall in" behind the officer and follow him back to the company from which he was supposed to have come.

Dick was in a quandary.

He hardly knew what to do.

If he refused to obey, it would bring on a struggle between himself and the officers, and his identity might be discovered.

All this flashed through Dick's brain in an instant.

He decided that he had better obey the officer's command.

He could then watch his chance and slip away later on.

So he saluted, muttered something which was supposed to be acquiescence to the officer's command, and followed along behind the two.

This part of it was all right.

He would have followed them, anyway.

And he was rewarded by hearing some very interesting information.

But when the point was reached where the company to which he was supposed to belong was located, Dick did not feel so good.

He might be found out at any moment.

True, the officer had mistaken him for a soldier whose name was Simkins; but the soldier's comrades would not be deceived should they get a look at his face in the light of the campfires.

He was in great danger, and realized this.

There was no chance for escape for Dick, however.

The officer forced him to take his place in the ranks, the company having just formed, and there he had to stand.

As luck would have it, the company stood where the light from the campfires did not shine to any great extent, and Dick's face could not be seen even by his right and left-hand comrades with any distinctness.

"It looks as if I am destined to have to march when the army moves," thought Dick.

The thought was not pleasing.

He did not wish to do this.

He wished to remain in New Brunswick.

He felt sure that the army would simply march down the road a few miles, as it had done that same day, and then march back again, and he thought he might as well save himself the trouble.

Then, while the army was absent, he wished to make his way into the British generals' headquarters and conceal himself; then he would be in a position to hear them talk

when they returned, and might learn much that would be of great benefit to the patriot cause.

CHAPTER V.

PRESSED INTO SERVICE.

But Dick was not to escape from the ranks so easily. He got no chance before the order to march came.

So when the company marched away, Dick went with it. He did not fancy this at all.

But he could not help himself.

He had to go.

It was rather a strange situation for a patriot soldier to be in.

Marching along the road in a company of British soldiers.

Dick could hardly keep from smiling at the absurdity of his position.

"If they knew that Dick Slater, the boy spy, was among them, there would have been considerable excitement, for the youth was known by reputation to all, and General Howe had even gone so far as to offer a reward of one hundred pounds to the person who would capture Dick and deliver him into the general's hands, a prisoner."

Dick was not likely to be discovered, now that they had got outside of the town, and the light of the campfires, however.

It would be a hard matter for Dick to make his escape, too.

He was nearly the middle man in the rank, and was, in fact, nearly in the centre of the company.

Had he been at the end, he would have seized an opportune moment and made a break for his liberty.

As it was he could not do it.

He was forced to keep in line and keep marching along with the redcoats.

Dick decided to make the best of the situation.

He was something of a philosopher, anyway.

He always tried to take things as they came.

He had found this to be the better way.

So he walked along and kept up a constant thinking.

At any rate he said to himself he had not done so badly to-night.

He had discovered the contemplated movement of the British, and had sent Bob to warn General Washington.

Then, too, he had secured considerable information besides.

He felt that, if he succeeded in escaping later on, he would have no reason to complain.

And he thought he would have no great difficulty in making his escape.

The march was kept up steadily for a couple of hours, and then there came the sound of musketry, from toward the front.

Dick's heart leaped.

Bob had undoubtedly reached Middlebrook in time, and the patriot army had marched down and had intercepted the advance guard of the British.

The firing told this as plainly as words could have done.

There was considerable confusion in the ranks of the British.

Evidently the presence of the patriot army had taken them entirely by surprise.

There was a general halt.

Then a delay of half an hour, during which time some skirmishing was indulged in.

Then the order came to "right-about, face!—forward, march!"

The British were going to retire to New Brunswick once more.

This was somewhat of a surprise to Dick.

He had not expected that the British would retreat a second time.

He did not know in what fear the British generals held Washington.

The truth of the matter was that Generals Howe and Cornwallis were afraid to try to get past the patriot army.

And they feared that, should they get past, they would be cut off from communication with New York.

If they had succeeded in getting clear away, out of reach of the patriot army on this night, they would have risked it, but to have to fight their way past—they did not feel like risking this.

Dick felt that his night's work had been quite successful.

It did not matter now, if he were mixed up in the company of British soldiers.

He would have an opportunity, doubtless, of doing something in the way of spy work, when they should reach New Brunswick.

Generals Howe and Cornwallis and the members of the staff would no doubt hold a council of war immediately after arriving at the encampment.

And Dick was determined to be where he could overhear what was said.

There would be matters discussed, then and there, of

immense importance, since the future operations of the entire British army would be the matter under discussion.

So, as may well be supposed, Dick was on the alert when the company of which he was a member entered the outskirts of the town of New Brunswick.

This company had been almost the last one to leave the encampment, when the army marched away toward the south, and it was now nearly the first to arrive at the encampment.

This suited Dick exactly.

It gave him the opportunity he wished for.

As soon as they had reached their quarters, Dick watched his chance, and stole away.

The keen-eyed captain saw him, however.

"Halt! come back here, Simkins!" he cried, authoritatively; "you're not going to get drunk to-night, if I can help it! Come back, or I will put a bullet through you!"

The captain thought Dick was Simkins, who was evidently a hard drinker.

This suited Dick all right.

It gave him an excuse for trying to slip away.

So instead of obeying the captain's command he leaped forward and ran toward the heart of the town at his best speed.

The captain was as good as his word.

He fired a shot from his pistol.

The aim was pretty good.

Dick heard the bullet whistle.

But a miss was as good as a mile.

Dick had heard the whistle of too many bullets during the past year to be frightened by one now.

He kept right on running.

The shot created considerable excitement.

The majority of those who heard the report of the pistol did not know why it was fired off.

They did not know but that a body of patriots was coming in upon them.

The matter was soon explained, however, and by that time Dick had disappeared.

The question which was agitating Dick's mind was: How was he to get into the house occupied by the British generals as headquarters?

Dick was turning this question over in his mind as he made his way along the street.

He had stopped running.

He was now walking.

He would not attract attention so quickly.

He knew the streets of New Brunswick well.

So he was not long in reaching the vicinity of the house occupied by the British generals and their staff.

Dick walked slowly up, until he was in front of the building.

He paused irresolutely and looked up at the door of the house.

As he did so, the door was suddenly jerked open.

A British officer leaped out, and, pointing toward Dick, cried:

"That is Dick Slater, the rebel spy! Seize him, men—seize him!"

Half a dozen men leaped out through the open doorway and sprang down the steps, intent on seizing Dick.

CHAPTER VI.

IN CLOSE QUARTERS.

Dick was taken wholly by surprise.

He had not been expecting anything of this kind.

How had they discovered his identity?

This question flashed into his mind, and then he acted.

He was not the youth to stand still and allow himself to be captured.

Promptness to act was one of Dick's strong points.

He leaped away and ran up the street with the speed of a fawn.

And after him came the redcoats.

They kept shouting for him to halt.

But Dick had no intention of doing anything of the kind.

He raced up the street to the cross street.

He turned down this street.

As he did so the pursuing redcoats fired a volley from their pistols.

Doubtless they feared he might escape them after all.

And Dick was determined to escape.

He was around the corner so quickly that the bullets missed him altogether.

He ran but a short distance, when spying a vacant lot where no building had been erected, he leaped the fence and raced across the lot, and, leaping another fence, ran up a sort of alley.

This had been executed so quickly that Dick's action had not been seen by his pursuers, owing to the fact that they did not turn the corner quickly enough to be a witness to it.

It was quite dark in the vacant lot and the back alley, so that when the British soldiers came opposite the lot they could not see Dick.

Still they were pretty shrewd.

They were sure the fugitive could not have run the entire length of the block.

Then he must have gone through the vacant lot.

They so reasoned.

And they leaped the fence and went through the lot as Dick had done.

They climbed over the second fence and made their way up the alley.

Dick was afraid they would do this.

So he was on the lookout for a place to hide.

When he was about the middle of the block he came even with the rear of the building occupied by the British generals, and from the front of which he had just been chased.

The thought came to him that he might be able to enter the building from the rear, as he had been prevented from entering from the front.

If he could do this it would be a good joke on the British.

Dick decided to try it, anyway.

He leaped the back yard fence and made his way swiftly to the rear of the house.

It was quite dark here.

Dick could see nothing.

He felt his way along the end of the building.

Presently he found what he was looking for, or rather feeling for.

This was a cellarway.

He quickly lifted one of the doors.

Then he passed down the steps and lowered the door.

When he reached the bottom he felt around and got hold of the latch of the door which barred the entrance to the cellar.

He lifted the latch and pushed against the door.

It would not open.

It was doubtless barred on the inside of the cellar.

Dick shook the door.

Then he pushed against it.

It shook rather easily, and did not seem to be very strongly barred, Dick thought.

He believed he might break it down.

He was about to make the attempt when he heard voices.

He was sure the voices belonged to the redcoats who had been chasing him.

The voices came closer.

He could hear what they were saying.

They were talking about him.

And wondering where he could have gone to.

They were disappointed on account of Dick's escape. They had expected to capture him. They were intending to enter the headquarters of the British generals by the rear door, as that would be closer than to go away around.

They had to report to the generals.

And Dick gathered from their conversation that they dreaded being forced to report that the "rebel" spy had escaped.

Dick could understand about how they felt.

But he was glad they felt as they did.

Suddenly he heard one of the redcoats give utterance to a remark that gave him a terrible start, however.

The remark the man made was:

"Say, fellows, maybe the rebel spy is down in the cellar!"

Dick's heart nearly stood still.

What if they took it into their heads to investigate?

They would be almost certain to find him.

"He might be down there; but I doubt it," said another.

"Let's make a search down there, anyway," said still another.

"All right; let's do!"

"Great guns! I'm in for it now!" thought Dick.

CHAPTER VII.

CAUGHT SPYING.

The redcoats were going to look for him down in the cellar.

Dick felt sure that he would be discovered now.

But he would not submit to capture without a struggle.

He would fight the whole crowd.

If possible he would break through and escape.

Then a thought struck Dick.

The redcoats had no light.

Therefore, they would simply have to feel around to determine whether or not their intended victim was in the cellarway.

The youth wondered if he might not in some manner evade discovery.

He began feeling around.

Dick felt above him.

Suddenly he gave a start.

A feeling of pleasure came over him.

The side walls of the cellarway were built of stone.

The cellar doors sloped upward from the ground to the house, at a point perhaps four feet higher up.

The wall was more than a foot wide.

Dick knew it would afford his body a resting-place.

The youth knew that the left-hand cellar door as he entered was fastened; the right-hand one was the one that opened.

Making use of this knowledge he quickly but cautiously climbed up on top of the stone wall and lay there, just underneath the cellar door that was fastened.

It was a slim chance, but the youth was determined to take it.

The redcoats might not think to feel up on top of the wall.

He had just got in position when the cellar door was opened.

"I'll go down," said a voice within three feet of Dick; "you fellows stand ready to head him off if he should be in here and should manage to get past me."

"All right," was the reply; "if he's there he will do well to offer no resistance!"

This was said for Dick's benefit, of course, to intimidate him and keep him from attempting resistance in case he was there.

The redcoat made his way slowly and carefully down the steps.

Doubtless he expected to be grappled with at any moment.

"He's a pretty brave fellow," thought Dick. "Not every one would be willing to do what he is doing."

The redcoat reached the bottom of the steps and began feeling around.

And now came the trial on Dick's nerves.

He knew the redcoat would not find any one at the bottom of the steps.

The question was would he think to feel up on top of the side walls?

Upon his failure to do so depended Dick's safety.

Dick held his breath and waited.

"Is he there, Plummer?" asked one of the men on the outside.

"No, he's not here," was the reply.

A chorus of exclamations of disappointment escaped the redcoats.

"I didn't think you'd find him," said one.

"Nor I," from another; "but I was in hope we would do so."

The redcoat who had come down into the cellarway to search for Dick made his way slowly back up the steps to the outer air.

He could have touched Dick with his outstretched hand.

But he had no idea the hated "rebel" was so near.

Slam! went the door, as it was dropped back into place. Dick drew a breath of relief.

His nerves had been on a strain.

He listened and heard the men enter the house through a rear doorway.

"Well, that was a narrow escape, but as long as I did escape it is all right," thought Dick.

He waited a few moments and then leaped down to the bottom of the cellarway.

"Now to see if I can force this door," he said to himself.

He took hold of the door and tested it once again.

It shook and rattled.

It was certainly not very strong.

He placed his shoulder against the door and pushed. The door creaked and groaned.

Dick pushed harder.

The door creaked and groaned still more.

Then Dick drew back.

He lurched forward and threw himself against the door with all his force.

The result exceeded his expectations.

The door was weaker than he had thought.

It gave way with a crash and fell inward.

Dick went with it.

He could not help himself, as he had thrown himself against the door with all his force.

The result was that he fell to the floor of the cellar in the midst of the ruins of the door.

Dick was afraid the noise of the door as it gave way and fell might have been heard upstairs.

He lay perfectly still and listened intently.

He heard no sounds above, and made up his mind that the noise had not been heard.

As he started to get up, however, he was treated to a surprise.

A startling one, too.

He suddenly felt himself seized in strong hands!

"Great guns! there was some one in the cellar!" was the thought that flashed through Dick's mind.

At the same instant he grappled with the person who had seized hold of him.

He could not see the person at all.

But he realized that the man, whoever he was, was a very muscular individual.

It promised to be a terrible struggle.

Dick felt confident, however, that if he could secure his favorite hold he could vanquish the man.

That hold was the throat hold.

The man seemed to be trying to get that hold on Dick.

But the youth was too clever to allow this.

He bent his head forward and pressed his chin tight down against his chest.

But by a series of movements of his hands he succeeded in getting hold of his opponent's throat.

A feeling of satisfaction went over the youth as he succeeded in getting the hold.

Now he felt confident of being able to overcome his opponent eventually.

And, by compressing the fellow's windpipe, he would be able to keep him from crying out to give the alarm to the redcoats upstairs.

And this was very important.

Dick did not wish the alarm to be given, more on account of the fact that it would ruin his plans for trying to acquire information, than because of fears for his own safety.

He had come there with the intention of securing information that would be of value to General Washington, and he was determined to succeed in the undertaking, if such a thing was possible.

So he fought the man with desperate energy and determination.

There was something peculiarly terror-inspiring about this combat.

It was in the darkness of the lonely cellar.

Neither combatant could see his opponent.

But if the combatants thought of this peculiar phase of the affair, they did not let it affect them.

They fought as fiercely as they would have done under other circumstances.

Doubtless the fellow who had attacked Dick soon realized that he had taken a big contract.

Probably he would have been glad to call for help; but he could not do it.

He had to depend altogether on his own efforts.

He was a strong fellow, but he was handicapped by the hold Dick had secured.

When a man is unable to breathe he rapidly loses his strength, no matter how strong he may be.

And Dick's opponent could not draw his breath to save his life.

Dick's fingers gripped the man's throat like fingers of steel.

All the youth had to do was to keep himself from being thrown, until his opponent became weak from lack of breath, and then he would be able to end the combat quickly.

This Dick did.

Presently his opponent gave utterance to a peculiar, gasping, gurgling groan and sank to the floor.

Dick held onto the fellow's throat for a few moments, until sure the man was unconscious, and then he released the hold on the throat.

Then Dick felt in the man's pockets and brought forth two handkerchiefs.

He had a couple of his own, and with the four he bound and gagged the man.

Then he rose to his feet with a sigh of relief.

"I'm glad that is over with," thought Dick.

Then he listened intently.

He wished to learn whether or not the struggle had attracted the attention of any one.

He judged it had not.

At any rate he heard no unusual sounds anywhere.

Dick waited a few minutes and then began to move around.

He wished to make an examination of the cellar.

He felt sure there were steps leading up into the house proper.

The steps would doubtless lead up to the kitchen.

In feeling around Dick presently found a little closet-like compartment at one side of the cellar.

There was a small door in the compartment.

Dick opened the door.

It creaked dimly on its hinges.

Dick paused and listened.

Dick was afraid he might have been heard by some one.

He heard nothing to indicate that this was the case, however.

He entered the little compartment-like room.

He felt all around.

Suddenly he realized what the compartment had been used for.

It was a sort of dumb-waiter affair, boxed up, and was used in the winter time to hoist up wood out of the cellar.

This knowledge came to Dick when he found a small windlass at one side. There was a rope wound around the windlass, and a thought struck the youth.

Might he not hoist himself up by means of the dumb-waiter and secure entrance into the building in this manner?

He would try it, at any rate.

He knew the windlass was intended to operate the dumb-waiter.

The rope probably ran over a wheel up in the attic, and by winding the rope up on the windlass the dumb-waiter would be lifted.

He took hold of the windlass and turned the handle.

The platform on which he stood began to rise slowly.

"It works all right," thought Dick. "I was in luck to find this!"

He kept turning the windlass.

And slowly but surely he rose.

When he thought he was about even with the first floor he stopped.

There was a sort of ratchet-attachment to the windlass, and, by locking this, the platform could be held at any point desired.

Dick locked the windlass.

Then he felt around.

He was sure he would find a door, or something of the kind.

Nor was he mistaken.

His hand encountered a knob.

He tried to turn it.

Then by feeling about, Dick became convinced that the knob was not a doorknob, but was fastened to a sliding panel.

He pushed sideways.

The panel did not move.

Then he pushed in the other direction.

The panel moved!

"I have struck it now," thought Dick.

He was very careful, however.

He did not know but there might be people in the room beyond.

He pushed the panel only an inch or so.

Then he looked through.

All was dark beyond.

He could see nothing.

Still there might be some one in the room for all that.

He would have to go slow.

It was necessary that he should be careful.

He listened intently.

If any one was in the room, Dick thought it possible that he would make a sound that would be heard.

His breathing would be audible in the stillness, if he was asleep.

Dick could not hear a sound, however.

He made up his mind that the room was not occupied.

Having so decided, he stepped through the opening, after pushing the panel farther to one side.

He paused and listened.

At first he could hear nothing.

Then a faint, confused murmuring came to his ears.

It came from toward the left.

He made his way cautiously in that direction.

He moved very slowly.

He could not see his hand before his face.

So he had to go slowly and feel his way.

He would take two or three steps forward, and then he would stop and listen.

The sound of voices grew plainer.

He decided that the owners of the voices must be in an adjoining room.

He wondered who the speakers could be.

He hoped they might turn out to be Generals Howe and Cornwallis and their staff.

He hoped they were holding a council of war.

In that case he might be able to overhear something of great interest.

He moved slowly across the room.

Presently he reached the wall.

He wondered if there was a connecting door between the rooms.

He moved slowly along the wall, feeling his way as he went.

Presently he paused.

A feeling of satisfaction came over him.

He had found the door.

Dick stooped down and felt for the keyhole.

He found it.

He placed his eye to the keyhole and looked through.

In the room beyond, within the range of his vision, were Generals Howe and Cornwallis and two or three of their staff officers.

Dick's heart leaped for joy.

The British officers were undoubtedly holding a council of war.

Now if he could hear as well as he had been able to see, all would be well.

He placed his ear to the keyhole.

He found that he could hear very well indeed.

"Good!" he thought; "now I am in a position to learn something of importance."

Dick had been very fortunate, indeed.

He had made his way into the building occupied by the British officers, and was now where he could listen to their conversation, as they discussed the events of the day and evening.

The British officers were plainly out of sorts.

Generals Howe and Cornwallis were both ill-tempered and snappish.

The fact that they had been headed off by the patriot army twice that day had not tended to make them good-tempered.

They had to vent their feelings, or burst, and the staff officers came in for some blowings up.

They had to take it, and bear up as best they might.

At last all got down to business, however, and the future course of the British army was talked over.

Dick listened to the discussion with great interest, as may be understood.

The movements of the patriot army would be governed largely by the movements of the British army, and if the movements of the British army were known in advance, it would make it much easier for General Washington, as he would know exactly what to do.

Dick kept his post for nearly two hours.

He heard much that was of importance.

Indeed, he secured much more information than he had expected to be able to do.

He felt very well satisfied, indeed.

He was just about to turn away, the conversation in the other room having changed to subjects that were of no interest to Dick, when he was startled by a peculiar thing.

The room he was in became suddenly illuminated.

Dick straightened up quickly and looked around to see what had caused the phenomenon.

He saw what had caused it instantly.

A door opening into the room from a hallway had been opened.

Standing in the doorway was a British soldier.

He held a lighted candle in his hand.

Behind him, peering into the room over his shoulders were half a dozen more soldiers.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIDE AND SEEK.

At the first thought, Dick wondered why they did not rush forward to attack him.

Then he remembered that he had on a British uniform.

They thought him one of themselves.

His attitude, that of listening at the keyhole, would be enough to brand him a spy, however.

Dick realized this.

He knew it would not do to stop and exchange words with the fellows.

His identity would be discovered, then, sure.

His best move would be to escape from the room before the redcoats recovered from their surprise, if they could do so.

But could he do it?

There was only one way to find out.

And that way by trying.

He walked slowly and deliberately toward the opening leading to the dumb-waiter.

He did not look in that direction.

He could walk there without looking.

He kept his eyes on the redcoats.

He was ready to make a dash for the opening, if they made a dash for him.

The redcoats seemed undecided what to say or do.

Dick hoped they would remain in that condition till he could reach the opening.

Then they could do what pleased them.

Dick thought he would be able to make his escape, no matter what they should do.

But the fellow with the candle suddenly noticed the opening toward which Dick was walking:

He uttered an exclamation.

"Who are you?" he cried; "and what are you doing here?"

Dick had his wits about him.

"Who am I?" he remarked, calmly.

"Yes, who are you? And what are you doing here?"

"I am a British soldier, like yourself, and I was sent for some wine. It was in the cellar, and I have just taken it into the room where the commander-in-chief and his staff are."

Dick spoke low.

He was afraid the conversation would be heard, and this he knew would lead to trouble, as several of the officers in the adjoining room knew him.

It was plain to be seen that the redcoats did not believe Dick.

"I don't believe a word of what you say!" the soldier cried.

"I don't believe he's one of us at all!" from another.

"I'll wager he's an imposter!" from still another.

"Likely he's a spy!"

This seemed to strike the others as being likely.

They uttered cries, and came leaping into the room.

They were evidently bent on seizing Dick.

The youth realized this.

But he was determined they should not accomplish their purpose.

He made a sudden leap toward the opening leading to the dumb-waiter.

He was closer to the opening than the redcoats were.

He leaped through the opening.

He slid the panel shut.

There was no way to fasten the panel that he knew of.

He unlocked the windlass and seized the handle.

He turned it rapidly and hoisted the dumb-waiter up the opening with incredible speed.

The bottom was past the top of the door opening into the room he had just left very quickly.

He quit turning the handle and locked the windlass once more.

Then he listened.

He heard the shuffling of feet.

Then he heard the panel slide back.

Next he heard several thuds.

These were followed by cries and curses, which came up to Dick's ears quite plainly.

He understood what had taken place at once.

The redcoats were unaware of the nature of the compartment into which the sliding panel opened.

They had supposed it possible for them to go where Dick could go, however, and had undoubtedly slid the panel back and leaped through the opening.

The dumb-waiter was not there to receive them, and they had gone down into the cellar.

Dick understood the situation, and, despite the gravity of his position, could not help smiling, to think of how the redcoats had been fooled.

No doubt but what some of the soldiers were injured to a greater or lesser degree.

The ones who had plunged down first would strike the hard floor, and then the ones who followed would strike on top of them. Thus they were between two fires, as it were.

Dick did not remain stationary long, however.

He realized that if he was to make his escape he must act quickly.

The entire household would be aroused in a few minutes.

Then systematic search would be instigated for him.

And he would be found and captured.

He unlocked the windlass, and, seizing the handle, raised the dumb-waiter up till it was, as near as he could guess, even with the second floor.

Then he stopped, and, fastening the windlass, felt around.

Presently he found the knob and pushed back a sliding panel, as he had done on the floor below.

He looked out.

The opening would let him out into the hall, not into another room.

A candle burning away down at the farther end of the hall made light enough so that Dick could see that this was the case.

What should he do?

Should he leave the dumb-waiter shaft and try to escape by way of the hall and the front door?

This would be very dangerous.

But it was a bold plan, and Dick had found that as a rule the boldest plan was the safest.

At any rate he had often succeeded by boldness where, he was sure, timid action would have failed.

He made up his mind to risk it.

He stepped through the opening into the hallway.

He pushed the sliding panel shut.

Not entirely shut, however.

The thought struck him that he might have to return and try to escape by the dumb-waiter route after all.

He did not believe in burning his bridges behind him.

He might wish to find the entrance to the shaft where the dumb-waiter was quickly, and by leaving the panel open slightly this would be easy.

Then he stole silently down the hall.

He reached the head of the stairs.

He was about to start down the stairs when several redcoats came hurrying along the hall below.

They were, Dick feared, coming upstairs.

He waited, however, to make sure.

To his relief they did not come upstairs.

They went to the front door, and, opening it, passed out. Dick looked after them wistfully.

"I wish I could get out that way!" he murmured.

He decided to make the attempt.

He stole silently down the stairs.

He was more than halfway down, when he heard the sound of footsteps on the stoop outside.

Several persons, to judge by the sound, were about to enter.

Dick realized that it would not do to try to escape through the front doorway at present.

He realized also that the house was overrun by excited redcoats.

Evidently the alarm had been given.

It was known that there was a "rebel" spy in the house.

Search was no doubt being instituted for him.

That this was so was evidenced almost immediately.

He heard doors open and shut.

Then he heard excited voices.

Next he heard the sound of hurrying footsteps.

And the footsteps were coming along the hallway below.

"They're coming upstairs to look after me!" thought Dick.

Dick knew that if he escaped detection he would have to act quickly.

He whirled and went back upstairs, three steps at a leap.

He was not quick enough, even then.

The man in the lead, coming along the hall, reached the foot of the stairs in time to see Dick as he ran back away from the head of the stairs.

He gave utterance to a shout of delight.

"There he is!" he cried; "there is the rebel spy! Come on, men, and we will capture him!"

Dick ran along the hall and reached the sliding panel, just as the redcoats reached the top of the stairs.

"Surrender!" cried the leading redcoat; "surrender, or we will fire!"

This decided Dick.

He was determined not to surrender.

So without a word in reply he opened the panel and leaped through, pulling the panel shut behind him.

As he did so, crack, crack, crack! went several pistol shots.

Dick unlocked the windlass, seized the handle, and quickly drew the dumb-waiter up to the next floor.

Then he fastened the windlass, pushed the panel open, and leaped out into the hallway.

He ran lightly but swiftly to the head of the stairs and hastened down them.

He reached the hallway below, and was at the head of the stairs leading on down to the first floor when one of the redcoats espied him and gave the alarm.

"There he is!" he cried; "fire, men! Don't let him escape!"

Dick bounded down the stairs, just as the shots rang out.

CHAPTER IX.

A LIVELY CHASE.

Of course, the bullets went too high, and none of them came anywhere near Dick.

At the bottom of the stairs were a half dozen redcoats.

They started up as Dick came leaping down.

They seemed paralyzed with amazement.

The youth quickly aroused them, however.

When within eight or nine steps of the bottom, he leaped forward and alighted squarely in the midst of the redcoats.

Two or three of them were knocked down by the impact, while the others were sadly demoralized.

Dick, however, struck the floor with his feet and bounded toward the front door.

He was desperate, now.

He was ready to take any and all chances.

He would escape now or die.

The hallway, farther back toward the centre of the house, was filled with redcoats.

They saw the flying youth.

They realized that he must be the spy in question.

They yelled for him to stop.

But they might as well have yelled at a deaf man.

Dick's entire attention was centred on the door.

He wondered if it was unlocked.

How he hoped it would prove to be unlocked!

In that case he thought he would be able to make his escape, at least from the house.

But if it was locked, the delay in trying to get the door open would probably cost him his liberty—perhaps his life.

He was at the door in three bounds.

He seized the knob and turned it.

Then he pulled.

The door came open.

Dick felt like shouting for joy.

At this instant he heard a voice back in the hallway cry:

"Fire!"

Dick leaped through the doorway, and, jerking the door shut, leaped down the steps leading to the street.

He heard the crash of the pistol shots.

But he was out of danger from the bullets.

He was not out of danger of capture, however.

The streets were alive with the British soldiers.

He would have hard work to make his escape.

He wished to get away from the vicinity of the British headquarters as quickly as possible.

So he darted around the nearest corner.

Some of the redcoats had seen him.

They started in pursuit.

Dick knew that now he would have to depend on his fleetness of foot to enable him to escape the redcoats.

He was a good runner.

But among eighteen thousand men—the number of soldiers in the British army—many were good runners.

And Dick soon found that some of those who were now pursuing him were fleet of foot.

He was unable to draw away from them.

He could just about maintain the distance between himself and pursuers, and that was all.

Earlier in the evening it had been cloudy.

But now the moon was out, full and bright.

The redcoats could see him plainly.

So he had no chance to dodge them in the darkness.

It must be done by speed.

Dick set his teeth and ran as he had never run before.

And behind him came the redcoats to the number of a dozen or more.

They hung on like leeches.

He could not shake them off.

They seemed determined to capture him.

And Dick was as determined that they should not do so.

Suddenly a squad of British soldiers appeared in front of Dick.

They seemed to rise up out of the earth.

"Halt!" one cried; "halt, or we will fire!"

But Dick did not obey the command.

He turned aside and leaped away at right angles from the course he had been going.

The redcoat gave the order to fire.

Dick heard him give the order.

The youth played the trick that had served him so well on more than one occasion.

He threw himself at full length on the ground.

Crash, roar!

The redcoats had fired a volley.

The bullets whistled above Dick.

The redcoats thought they had brought Dick down, so well had he timed his fall.

They uttered shouts of delight.

"You haven't got me yet!" thought Dick, grimly.

Then he leaped to his feet and raced onward.

Shouts of anger and surprise escaped the lips of the redcoats.

They could not understand it.

They could not see how the "rebel" spy had escaped being riddled with bullets.

But he had escaped death.

That was evident.

No dead man—or even a badly wounded one—could have leaped up and continued running.

"I hope they won't fire upon me any more!" thought Dick; "a chance bullet is likely to hit me."

Scattering shots were fired by his pursuers, however.

Evidently they were firing at will, as they ran.

There was not much chance that any of the bullets would hit the mark, but there was sufficient chance to make the fugitive feel uncomfortable.

He ran his best, however, and gave the matter of being hit but little thought.

It was not Dick's way to dwell on the might-be's.

He was very practical.

If he should be struck by a bullet—well, he would know it.

There was no use of trying his nerves by feeling afraid that he might be struck.

Dick had been headed in a northern direction when turned aside by the second body of redcoats.

He had a purpose in going in that direction.

It was not far to the timber along the Raritan River—and in fact it was not far to the river itself.

Dick felt confident that if he could succeed in reaching the timber he would be able to escape from the British.

So he began edging in that direction again.

The redcoats seemed to understand what his intentions were.

They made strenuous efforts to head him off.

They realized that if he once got into the timber they would have hard work catching him.

Dick exerted himself to the utmost, however.

Slowly but surely he worked his way in the direction of the timber.

It was a hard race.

But Dick was slowly succeeding.

And at last, to his great joy, he succeeded in reaching the timber, though not until he had run more than a mile from New Brunswick, in an easterly and northerly direction.

Wild shouts and yells of anger escaped the lips of the redcoats when Dick reached the timber.

They fired a volley, too, in the hope that they might kill or wound the fugitive.

Luckily none of the bullets took effect.

A thrill of joy went over Dick as he entered the timber.

"Now I will get away from them," he thought.

At that instant his foot caught in a trailing vine and he fell headlong to the ground.

His head struck against a tree.

Dick realized this; then he suddenly lost consciousness.

The blow had been severe, and he was knocked senseless.

On came the redcoats, running as rapidly as they could.

They burst into the timber.

One tripped and fell.

"What in blazes was that that I fell over?" he mumbled, as he scrambled to his feet.

The others had not noticed his fall.

They were too intent on chasing the fugitive.

They rushed right on, never stopping.

The redcoat felt around.

Suddenly his hands came in contact with Dick's body.

"Great guns! It's a man!" the redcoat exclaimed.

Then a thought struck him:

It was the rebel spy!

He had undoubtedly been brought down by one of the bullets fired in that last volley.

Doubtless he was dead!

The thought electrified the redcoat.

He gave utterance to a wild shout of triumph.

"This way, fellows!" he cried; "I've got him! He's dead! This way, quick!"

The loud shout from the redcoat, sounding almost in his ear, aroused Dick.

He had been merely temporarily stunned, anyway.

For a few moments he lay still, trying to think where he was and what had happened.

Suddenly, as he heard the words of the redcoat, it all came back to him.

"I'm dead, am I?" he thought; "and they've got me, have they? Well, we'll see about that!"

Dick heard the sound of footsteps approaching.

He could hear excited voices as well.

He knew that if he wished to keep from being made a prisoner he would have to act quickly.

The redcoat who had fallen over him, and who had yelled to the others, thought Dick was dead.

So he did not, of course, deem it necessary to pay any further attention to the "rebel."

A dead man did not need to be watched, certainly.

But he was quickly undeceived regarding Dick being dead.

The youth seized the redcoat.

He got the fellow by the throat and compressed his windpipe till the man could only gasp and gurgle.

It would have been interesting to have known what the redeoat's thoughts were at that moment.

He was certainly the worst surprised fellow anywhere in that part of the country..

Dick worked his way up, still holding to the redcoat's throat, and finally was on his feet.

The fellow was almost unconscious, now.

His companions were close at hand, too.

Dick knew he would have to get away at once, or be captured..

The latter could not be thought of for a moment.

So while the advancing redcoats were yet a few yards distant, he threw the half-unconscious man from him and bounded away into the timber.

The redcoat proved to be made of tougher material than Dick had thought.

He got his breath and managed to gurgle out in a half-yell the statement that the "rebel" was not dead at all.

"Hurry, or he'll get away!" he cried, and then while the other redcoats gathered around their comrade and asked for information, Dick was making good headway through the timber.

"They'll be after me!" he thought; "they are persevering fellows, I must admit."

The redcoats asked questions rapidly and eagerly, and their comrade who had been choked by Dick answered as best he could.

By the time they had secured the information which he had to impart, Dick had secured a good lead.

The redcoats were determined, though, and they set out in pursuit.

They seemed to know intuitively in which direction Dick had gone.

At any rate they followed him without much trouble, seemingly.

They spread out, like a fan, too, and this would give him no chance to double on them and get back past them.

Dick did not wish to get back, however.

He was now going in the direction in which he wished to go.

True, he knew he would soon be at the river, but he would not let a little thing like a ducking stand in the way of effecting his escape.

He could swim like a fish.

The river would be no bar to his progress.

He heard the redcoats coming behind him.

But they were not making any better speed than he was. Presently he reached the river bank.

He made his way down to the water, and, plunging in, swam toward the other bank with strong strokes.

The redcoats reached the bank which he had just left, while yet he was not more than halfway across the river.

The British soldiers saw the swimmer.

They uttered shouts of delight.

They drew their pistols and leveled them.

"Stop!" cried one; "stop and come back here, or we will fill you so full of lead that you will sink in less than no time!"

CHAPTER X.

SENT TO NEW YORK ON IMPORTANT BUSINESS.

Dick did not stop, however.

He was determined to escape.

He did not believe the redcoats could hit him.

It would be an accident if they did.

The moon was shining, but the river was shaded by the trees, and the British soldiers could not see Dick plainly.

"Stop!" again rang out the voice.

Dick made no reply.

He merely swam faster and harder.

The longer the redcoats delayed firing, the better would suit him.

The angry redcoats were not disposed to wait longer, however.

They realized that if they were to keep the youth from escaping they would have to do something quickly.

Suddenly the sharp command rang out:

"Fire!"

Dick had been listening for this.

The instant he heard the command he dove.

He disappeared beneath the water with the quickness of a member of the finny tribe.

As he did so the smothered sound of the musket and pistol reports came to Dick's ears.

Some of the bullets may have struck where Dick had been.

They did no damage, however, for he was several feet under the water at the time.

Dick had taken note of the distance to the shore when he dove.

He believed he could swim the rest of the way under the water.

If he could do so he would be able to fool the redcoat nicely.

Not seeing him come to the surface they would think they had killed him.

Dick was determined to work the trick.

He remained under the water and swam rapidly toward the other shore.

He reached it before being forced to come to the surface to get air.

When he did come up out of the water he was right in under some bushes, and he knew it would be impossible for the redcoats to see him.

He made his way quickly out onto the solid ground.

Dick drew a breath of relief.

"There! I'm all right, at last, I think!" he said to himself. "Now to reach my horse and return to Middlebrook!"

Dick paused a few moments and listened.

He could hear the redcoats talking.

He heard them say that they had killed the "rebel" spy.

"You are wrong there!" thought Dick, with a smile "but I am willing you should think so. It makes my escape just that much easier."

Dick heard the redcoats take their departure.

He could tell they were going by the fact that the sound of their voices grew fainter and fainter.

He too struck out.

He did not know exactly where he was, but being very familiar with the country all around in this part of New Jersey, Dick did not doubt his ability to soon find the place where he had left his horse.

Nor did he have much trouble in doing so.

After a brisk walk of twenty minutes through the timber he came out at a point that was familiar to him.

He had been there before, and, using it as a guide, he soon reached the spot where he had left his horse.

His horse was still there.

The noble animal whinnied as Dick approached.

Dick patted the horse on the neck.

"Have you been lonesome, old fellow?" Dick asked, and the animal whinnied again, as if to say, "Yes."

Dick quickly untied the halter-strap, and, mounting the horse, rode away.

He rode slowly till he reached the highway.

Then he forced the horse to a gallop.

It took him but little more than an hour to reach his destination.

The patriot army reached Middlebrook at almost the same time that Dick got there.

The patriot soldiers were feeling a little better.

They had had the satisfaction of indulging in a little skirmish with the British, at any rate.

They had exchanged shots with their enemies, and this was something.

They would have liked it better, however, had the British stood their ground, and a real battle resulted.

Bob was glad to see Dick back at camp, safe and sound.

"I was afraid you would get into trouble, Dick, and perhaps even be captured," he said; "and if you had not got back I was going to go back to New Brunswick and see if I could find you."

"You're a true-hearted friend, Bob!" said Dick, earnestly; "I did have some close calls after you were gone."

"Tell me about it, old man."

"In the morning, Bob; we had better try to get some sleep now, as the commander-in-chief might have work for us to-morrow and to-morrow night that would keep us at it."

"True, Dick."

They lay down and were soon asleep.

Next morning Dick told Bob the story of his adventures in the British encampment, and how he had been pressed into service in the British ranks, and had been present during the skirmish between the two armies.

Dick uttered exclamations of wonder.

"You're a great one, Dick!" he said, "you do have the most wonderful adventures of any fellow I ever heard of!"

"I don't care, so long as I succeed in getting through the adventures safely," smiled Dick.

The youths were still talking of the night's adventures when an orderly came and told Dick he was wanted at headquarters.

"More work, Dick!" said Bob, an eager look on his face. "I judge so, Bob."

Dick went at once to headquarters.

He was greeted pleasantly by the commander-in-chief and such of his staff as happened to be present.

"You did well last night, Dick," said General Washington.

"I am glad if your excellency is pleased," said Dick, quietly. "I secured some information which may be of value to you also," he added. "I was waiting for you to get through breakfast, when I intended coming and reporting."

"Let me have the information, Dick!" said the commander-in-chief, eagerly.

Dick told him what he had learned while listening to the British generals and their staff when they were holding their council of war, after having returned to New Brunswick the night before.

The information was not as important as some that Dick had secured on former occasions when he had entered the British lines, but it was of sufficient importance to give General Washington considerable pleasure, as it would aid him in deciding upon his movements.

He discussed the information, pro and con, with such of the members of his staff as were present, and then presently he again turned to Dick.

There was a sober, serious look on his face as he looked at the youth.

"Dick," he said, "I have some work for you to do; some very important work!"

"I shall be pleased to attempt it, your excellency," replied Dick, promptly; "and if I can possibly accomplish it, you may be sure I will do so!"

Dick spoke determinedly and earnestly.

"I was sure you would say this," said the commander-in-chief; "and I will say that I believe that if any one can do this work successfully, you can."

"Thank you, sir," said Dick.

"Dick," said the commander-in-chief, after a few moments of silence, "the work I wish you to undertake is difficult and dangerous. I wish you to take some important papers to a certain man who is in New York City. I do not mind telling you, since I have the utmost confidence in you, that the man is a Frenchman, named Louis Labournay, and he is to take the papers across the ocean to France,

and deliver them into the hands of Benjamin Franklin, who is there, as you know, acting in our interests as a commissioner."

Dick bowed gravely.

He had kept well informed regarding everything, and knew that Benjamin Franklin was in Paris.

"Give me the address of Louis Labournay," said Dick, quietly, yet determinedly, "and I will deliver those papers to him, or die in the attempt!"

"Good!" said Washington, approvingly; "you are made of the right sort of metal, my boy! When can you start for New York?"

"This morning, your excellency."

"Good!" again exclaimed the commander-in-chief.

Then he took a sealed package out of the drawer of his desk and handed it to Dick.

At the same time he grasped the youth's hand in his strong right hand, and gave him a hearty handshake.

"My boy," said General Washington, "it is unnecessary for me to tell you how valuable these papers are, or how important it is that you should safely deliver them. Go, now, and God bless you!"

Dick said good-by, and saluting, withdrew, first having placed the important package in his breast pocket.

Bob was eager to know what was in the wind when Dick returned to the quarters occupied by his company of "Liberty Boys."

Dick told Bob what the work was that he had to do.

Of course, Bob said he was going to go along.

At first Dick did not favor this idea.

Bob insisted, however.

He brought forth so many arguments that at last Dick consented.

He reasoned that Bob's presence could do no particular harm, and something might turn up that would make him glad he had allowed his friend to accompany him.

So he told Bob he might go along.

This pleased Bob mighty.

They began making preparations for their journey at once.

They doffed their continental uniforms.

It would not do to venture into New York City wearing the continental blue.

They donned ordinary citizen's clothing.

They thought this would be safer, perhaps, than to risk wearing the British uniform.

Dick transferred the package of valuable papers from the pocket of the coat he had taken off to the pocket of the one he had just put on, and, after looking to their pistols, the youths were ready to start.

They went out and saddled and bridled their horses. Then without more ado they mounted and rode away. Dick had already made his plans.

As they had all day before them, and could do so as well, he decided to make their entrance into New York City as safe as possible, by entering from the north.

This would not arouse suspicion, whereas, if they tempted to enter from the west, by crossing over from Paulus Hook, they would be subjected to close scrutiny and might be arrested as spies by the redcoats.

Dick knew that, up the river a distance of perhaps eight miles, there was a patriot—and a personal friend of his—self and Bob, too—who had a small ferry, on which they could cross the Hudson.

They would go there.

Then by crossing over they could ride down Manhattan Island and enter the city from the north.

They had done this same thing before, and were sure they could do it again.

They rode northward a distance of more than thirteen miles, before turning eastward.

They did this so as to avoid all chance of meeting the redcoats.

It was about the middle of the afternoon when they reached the home of the ferryman.

As the youths were in no hurry, it being their intent and desire to enter the city after nightfall, they remained at the cabin of the patriot ferryman until about an hour before sunset.

Then they led their horses aboard the little flatboat and were taken across the Hudson River.

Bidding their friend good-by, Dick and Bob mounted and rode away toward the south.

The sun had been down just about an hour when the youths rode into the city.

It was now dark.

The street lamps were lighted.

The youths rode to a livery stable where they had left their horses on more than one occasion when in the city, and leaving the animals, they walked on down into the main part of the city.

They walked down Broadway quite a distance, and then turned into a side street.

Dick kept a sharp lookout, and presently came to a street in front of a dark, forbidding-looking house, whose front was unbrightened by the least suggestion of a light within.

"This is the number, Bob!" said Dick in a low tone. "We enter here!"

They ran up the steps, and Dick knocked on the door. There was no response from within, and, after waiting for a reasonable time, Dick knocked again.

He knocked louder this time.

And was more successful.

Steps were heard within the building.

Some one was coming.

Presently there was a rattling sound, as if the door was being unbarred.

Then the door opened a short distance, and a face appeared.

"Who is it that wishes to enter here?" came the inquiry in a deep, peculiar tone of voice.

"Does a gentleman by the name of Louis Labournay live here?" asked Dick, without paying any attention to the query of the man.

"He does!" was the prompt reply. "Do you wish to see him?"

Dick had a quick ear and remarkable perception.

He was sure that he detected repressed eagerness in the man's tone.

It did not take much to arouse Dick's suspicions as a rule.

And now he decided to be very careful.

For there was something about the man's actions, his looks, his tone of voice that caused a faint feeling of suspicion to rise within the youth.

"Yes, we wish to see him," replied Dick, quietly.

"Enter, then!" and the man opened the door wide.

Dick and Bob stepped through into the hall, and the door was closed quickly behind them.

A peculiar, undefinable feeling of suspicion, of half-dread, stole over Dick as the door went shut.

He seemed to feel instinctively that they were in danger.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK IS SUSPICIOUS.

The man led the way along a hallway, which was very dimly lighted, and conducted them into what seemed to be a very well-furnished library.

A single candle was burning in this room, but the man lighted three more, and the four dispelled the darkness fairly well.

"Wait here," said the man, "and I will send Monsieur Labournay to you."

"Thank you!" said Dick.

The man left the room.

Dick listened intently, and, waiting till he was satisfied the fellow had really gone, he turned to Bob and whispered:

"What do you think of it, old man?"

Bob shook his head.

"I hardly know," he replied, cautiously; "I feel queerly. It seems to me as though something was wrong."

"Just my feeling!" declared Dick, in a low, careful undertone. "I have a faint suspicion, Bob, that all is not right here. I think we had better be careful!"

"I think so, too."

At this instant there came to the ears of the youths a cry in an unmistakably human voice.

The cry seemed to come from some remote part of the building—whether upstairs or down, they could not tell—and while at first pretty distinct, it quickly ended in a smothered gurgling sound.

The youths looked at each other in surprise, and with a questioning look in their eyes.

What did it mean?

Who had uttered the cry?

And why?

Dick decided to be very, very cautious.

There was some mystery here, he was sure, and until that mystery was solved he would not feel like acting freely.

He would wait and see Louis Labournay, and then perhaps he might be able to decide what to do.

Presently there came the sound of footsteps in the hall.

They were not the footsteps of the man who had admitted the youths, Dick knew.

They were much lighter.

There was not much time for conjecture, however, for a few moments later the door opened and a man entered.

At the first glance Dick took a dislike to the newcomer.

He did not look like a Frenchman, Dick thought.

His complexion was too fair.

Still, he might be, and as the man stepped forward and bowed, the youths bowed in return.

"You wished to see me?" he asked.

Dick thought there was a strange, repressed eagerness to his tone.

"We wished to see Louis Labournay," replied Dick, quietly.

The man looked at Dick somewhat searchingly, the youth thought.

"I am Louis Labournay," the man said.

Dick was puzzled.

He looked at the man searchingly, and somehow a doubt of the truth of his statement that he was Louis Labournay came to Dick.

The youth scarcely knew what to do.

He and Bob had entered the house and asked to see Louis Labournay; now a man claiming to be Louis Labournay stood before them, and they would have to state their business and tell him why they wished to see him.

Somehow Dick did not feel like turning the important papers over to this man. He would not do it until after he had become satisfied the man was Louis Labournay.

But how was he to put the man off?

How was he to avoid stating his business at once?

The man was before him, waiting.

But Dick's was a fertile mind.

He was full of expedients.

A thought came to him.

He decided to act upon it.

"Very well, Mr. Labournay," said Dick, quietly; "we were sent here with the following instructions: We were to come here, remain over night, and then in the morning we were to deliver to you a verbal message from a certain person whose identity is to remain a secret until that time also. If that will be satisfactory, we will remain; otherwise, we shall——"

Dick fancied he saw a disappointed look cross the face of the man.

It was gone instantly, however, and he said, quietly:

"Oh, that is entirely satisfactory. And now, I suppose you have no objections to giving me your names."

"It will be contrary to instructions to give our names," replied Dick. "The person who sent us said you would take us on trust; but of course you do not need to do so if you do not wish to."

"Oh, that will be all right," was the reply. "And now, have you been to dinner?"

"Yes, we ate before coming here."

"Then shall I show you to your rooms?"

"If you please, sir, though one room will be sufficient."

"Very well, come."

The man led the way out of the room.

The youths followed and were conducted to the next floor above.

Halfway along the hall the man paused, and, opening a door, said:

"Here is the room. I trust you will find it comfortable."

He handed Dick the candle which he carried in his hand, and bidding him good night, the youths entered the room.

The youths listened until the sound of the man's footsteps died away, and then they looked at each other inquiringly.

The two "Liberty Boys" were puzzled.

"What does it mean, Dick?" asked Bob in a low tone.

"That is the question, Bob," was the sober reply. "confess I am puzzled."

"Do you suspect that this man is not Louis Labournay Dick?"

"I more than half suspect it, Bob."

"And that is the reason you put off stating your business till to-morrow morning?"

"That was my reason, Bob."

"That was a good idea. Somehow, I don't like the look of that fellow."

"Nor do I."

"He has a foxy look."

"You are right. He's not at all the sort of man one would expect that General Washington would trust with important papers."

"That's what I think, too, Dick. And, say, did you hear that cry a little while ago, when we were down in the library?"

"I did."

"What did it mean, Dick?"

"I don't know, old man; but——"

"But what, Dick?"

"I am going to try to find out what it meant, before morning."

"Ah!" breathed Bob, his eyes shining eagerly. "That's the way to talk, Dick. And you think——"

"That when we discover who uttered that cry and where it was uttered, we may discover something else of importance—something having an important bearing on our business here."

Bob nodded his head.

"I more than half think you are right, Dick," he said.

The youths talked for a few minutes longer, and then Dick suggested that they extinguish the light.

"We will make them think we have gone to bed," he said. "That will make it easier for us to pursue our investigations."

"So it will," admitted Bob.

They extinguished the light, and then taking seats waited there in the darkness for perhaps an hour.

At about that time Dick was sure he heard cautious foot steps in the hall outside.

"One of them has come to see whether or not we have gone to bed," Dick whispered in Bob's ear.

"I guess you are right," was the cautious reply.

Again the youths heard the footsteps, but they grew lighter and lighter, and presently were heard no more.

"He's gone," whispered Bob.

"Yes."

"When are you going to begin the search, Dick?"

"I judge that we had better wait till midnight, Bob. It won't do to go roaming about the house while those two men are awake."

"True enough; they would likely hear us, and then there would be trouble."

"So there would."

Presently Dick removed his shoes.

"I'm going to steal out and downstairs, Bob," he whispered, "and see if I can learn anything that will throw a light on this mystery."

"Well, be very careful, Dick. Don't let them discover you."

"I'll try not to, Bob."

Dick left the room and stole along the hall and down the stairway.

Being in his stocking feet, he was enabled to move noiselessly.

It was quite dark in both the upper and lower halls, but Dick had no trouble in finding his way.

He soon reached the door leading into the library.

Here he paused.

A faint streak of light shining through showed where the keyhole was, and, bending over, Dick applied his eye to the keyhole and looked through.

He could see nothing, however, save a few articles of furniture.

The men, if they were in the room, were not within Dick's range of vision.

That they were there, Dick soon knew.

By applying his ear to the keyhole, he could hear their voices.

The men were talking in low tones, however, and although Dick strained his hearing to the utmost, he could not distinguish the words spoken.

All he could make out was a sort of murmuring sound. Dick was disappointed.

He had hoped to be able to hear and understand the conversation between the two men.

Had he been able to do so, he would undoubtedly have learned much that would have interested him greatly.

Dick realized this, and this it was that caused his disappointment to be so keen.

He wondered if there was any way that he could get close enough to the men to enable him to hear and understand what was said.

A moment's reflection showed him that he could not.

He and Bob would have to let their suspicions go unverified until they were enabled to verify them or disprove them in some other manner.

They would wait until midnight, then make their search, and if possible find the person who had uttered the strange cry which they had heard.

Somehow they felt that if they succeeded in finding this person, they would learn all that they wished to know.

So Dick, after becoming satisfied that he could not overhear the conversation of the men, left his position and rejoined Bob in the room upstairs.

He reported his lack of success to Bob, and then they talked for an hour or so, discussing the various phases of the strange affair.

Presently they heard the sounds of stirring downstairs, however, and they became silent and listened.

The sounds soon ceased, and the youths decided that the men had gone to bed.

The youths did not talk much more after that.

They sat still and gave themselves up to their thoughts.

The darkness and utter silence presently had their effect, and almost before they knew it, the youths had fallen into a doze.

Suddenly something roused Dick and he came out of his doze with a start.

He listened.

The sounds of cautious footsteps and whispering voices came to his ears.

The footsteps and voices seemed to be right at the door of the room.

"What could it mean?" Dick asked himself.

That the owners of the whispering voices were the two men they had seen, Dick was confident, but what were they doing up there at the door of the youths' room?

Dick was suspicious.

He believed that their presence there meant danger to himself and Bob.

Reaching over, he placed his hand on Bob's shoulder and gave his friend a gentle shake.

Bob had only been dozing, and was awake in an instant.

"Sh!" warned Dick. "Listen!"

Bob did so.

He, too, heard the whispering voices.

"I wonder what it means?" he asked in a cautious whisper.

"I don't know," was the reply. "We will have to await developments."

The developments came very soon.

The youths heard the doorknob turn.

They had noticed when the door was opened for them to enter in the first place that the door creaked slightly.

They now heard the door creak, so knew that it had been opened.

Then they heard the sound of light shuffling footsteps, but the sound came to them so much plainer than before, that they realized that the owners of the feet had entered the room!

CHAPTER XII.

THE TORIES' CLEVER SCHEME DEFEATED.

Dick and Bob were as silent as death.

They sat like statues.

But they were on the alert.

Their nerves and muscles were tense and taut,
They were ready for whatever might come.
And they believed that trouble was at hand.

They were sure the stealthy visit of the two men boded them no good.

They were confident that, for some reason, the men were going to try to make them prisoners.

Why else would they enter the room in this stealthy fashion?

The youths listened intently, and were enabled to trace the movements of the two men by the sound of their footsteps.

The men were stealing across the floor toward the bed which stood at the opposite side of the room.

The youths understood that the men thought them in bed and asleep.

Taking this knowledge as a basis for reasoning, the youths were confident they knew what the men would do.

They felt sure that the men would leap upon the bed, expecting to find them there and seize them.

And this was exactly what the fellows did.

The youths heard a sort of muffled thud followed immediately by a creaking sound, and knew that the men had made their leap.

Then Dick and Bob acted.

They were now fully convinced that the men were crooked.

They made up their minds to turn the tables on the fellows.

They decided to capture the would-be captors.

Dick and Bob had perfect confidence in themselves.

They did not for one moment doubt their ability to overcome the two fellows and make them prisoners.

So the instant they heard the men strike the bed, they leaped forward.

They, too, threw themselves upon the bed, and, as they had expected, they found themselves grasping the forms of two men.

The fellows had been treated to a double surprise.

They had expected to find Dick and Bob in the bed, but had failed.

This was surprise number one.

And now they felt themselves leaped upon and seized.
This was surprise number two.

Taking the fellows by surprise gave the youths a decided advantage.

Although it was dark, they succeeded in getting good holds very quickly.

They grasped the fellows by the throats.

While aware that this would leave the men's arms free, the youths were also aware of the fact that by choking the men they could quickly reduce them to insensibility.

They had proven it on more than one occasion.

There is nothing that will reduce a man to a state of helplessness so quickly as to have his wind shut off.

The youths knew this, and they set in to reduce the men into a state of helplessness as quickly as possible.

They quickly found that they had no light task on their hands, however.

The men were strong, well-muscled fellows, and lithe as panthers.

They struggled fiercely.

Fearing the bed would break down, the youths leaped off the bed and pulled the men off after them.

Then the struggle went on more fiercely than ever.

The knowledge of the fact that the men were proving hard customers to handle only made Dick and Bob the more determined to conquer them.

Although the men struck fiercely and did their best to break loose from the youths' grasp, they could not do it.

The youths held on and compressed the fellows' wind-pipes tighter and tighter.

It was a terrible struggle while it lasted.

It seemed all the more terrible because of the fact that it was being waged in utter darkness.

The grasp began to tell on the fellows presently.

They began to choke and gurgle.

It was impossible for them to get their breath.

Under such circumstances they could not hold out long.

They grew weaker and weaker.

There is no doubt of the fact that the men were surprised to find the youths so strong.

Beforehand they would no doubt have laughed at the idea that the youths would prove more than a match for them in a combat.

Now, however, they found that such was the case.

They fought as fiercely and as valiantly as they could, however.

They were not cowards by any means.

But then, perhaps, they thought they were fighting for their lives.

Under such circumstances any one would fight fiercely.

They grew weaker and weaker.

Within less than two minutes after Dick and Bob had seized them by the throats, they ceased struggling and sank to the floor unconscious.

Dick and Bob had triumphed.

"Now if we had a light," said Dick, "we could see what to do with these fellows."

"I think there is a candle out in the hall," said Bob; "I will go and get it."

"All right, Bob; hurry, before these fellows come to."

Bob hastened out into the hall.

He was back again in a few moments, bringing the lighted candle with him.

The youths were right regarding the identity of the two men.

They were the men who admitted them to the house and the one who had claimed to be Louis Labournay.

"We must tie them up before they come to," said Dick.

"That's right," said Bob. "What shall we tie them with?"

"Take a sheet off the bed, Bob, and tear it into strips."

Bob did so.

A few moments later the two men were tied tight and fast.

Just as the youths were finishing the work, the men recovered consciousness.

They looked around them and blinked their eyes in a wondering manner.

Presently the one who had claimed to be Louis Labournay spoke.

"What does this mean?" he asked. "Why have we been trussed up in this fashion?"

"Perhaps you will not refuse to answer a question," said Dick. "Why did you two slip in here like thieves in the night and try to make prisoners of us?"

"We didn't try to do so," was the sullen reply.

"You didn't?"

Dick's tone had an incredulous ring.

"We did not."

"Why, then," asked Dick, "did you slip in here and leap upon the bed?"

"We thought we heard a cry for help," was the unblushing reply; "and we came in here to see what the trouble was."

"Came in to see what the trouble was and brought no light along," said Dick with a grim smile.

"Well, we—that is—came in such a hurry that we didn't have time to bring a light," stammered the fellow.

"That'll do to tell," laughed Bob. "Eh, Dick?"

"Yes, Bob."

Then, turning to the fellows, Dick went on:

"Your speaking of having heard a cry, reminds me we heard a cry also, soon after we came here this evening, and now I am going to ask you, who was it that uttered the cry?"

In spite of themselves a startled look appeared on the fellows' faces.

They glanced at each other quickly.

Dick interpreted the look and glance correctly.

The fellows were frightened.

"You must have been mistaken," said the one who claimed to be Louis Labournay. "There are no other persons in this house, save ourselves—with the exception of the servants. Perhaps you may have heard one of the servants calling out to another."

"I don't think that was what it was," said Dick, decidedly. "I think you might as well own up."

Again the startled look appeared on the fellows' face.

"Own up to what?" asked the one who had done most of the talking.

"Own up that you have a man a prisoner in this house." The fellows turned pale.

"Own up that we have a prisoner in this house!" gasped the fellow who had claimed to be Louis Labournay.

"Yes."

"But we have no man a prisoner. Such talk is folly, and you two will suffer for what you have done, young men. You will regret having treated us thus—will regret having accepted our hospitality, and then having turned upon us in this manner and made prisoners of us."

"I have no fears," said Dick. "In my opinion, you are

both frauds, impostors, and not what you seem to be. I do not believe you are Louis Labournay at all, and I think you are trying to work some kind of a scheme. What that scheme is, we shall soon learn, for we are now going to search for and find the man whom you have been holding a prisoner. That man will, I think, prove to be the real Louis Labournay, and he, of course, will know what your scheme was."

The two fellows actually groaned.

They evidently realized that there was no use to try and fool Dick further.

They were prisoners and helpless.

They could not prevent the youths from making the search.

"We give up," said the man who had claimed to be Louis Labournay. "You are right. The real Louis Labournay is a prisoner, and I am an impostor. If you'll promise not to be too hard on us, I will tell you exactly where Labournay is hidden."

"We can find him without instructions," replied Dick, quietly; "and as to your fate, it shall rest in the hands of Louis Labournay. You may, however, if you wish, tell us where he is. It will do no harm, and may do you some good."

"Very well, you will find him in the left-hand room at the head of the stairs on the next floor above."

Dick took the candle, and he and Bob left the room.

They made their way along the hall and up to the head of the stairs.

Turning to the left, they tried the door, which they knew to be the one meant by the man.

The door was locked.

The key was in the lock, however, and, quickly unlocking the door, the youths opened it and entered the room.

A dark-complexioned, but good-looking man of perhaps forty years of age was in the room.

He was a prisoner, his arms being tied together behind his back.

He looked up as the youths entered, and an exclamation escaped him.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I thought you were my jailers coming to visit me, but I see I was mistaken. Who are you?"

There was an eager light in the man's eyes.

"We are friends, I am sure," replied Dick; "and you, are you not Louis Labournay?"

"Yes, yes!" eagerly. "And those scoundrels, they made me a prisoner. Where are they? How did you get in here? They will attack you and make you prisoners also!"

The man glanced toward the door, an alarmed look in his eyes.

"There is no danger of that," said Dick, quietly. "The shoe is on the other foot. We have already made prisoners of them."

"Thank God!" the man exclaimed, fervently. "But you are mere boys; I don't see how you succeeded in accomplishing this."

"We did accomplish it, however," said Dick, quietly.

And drawing a knife from his pocket, the youth quickly cut the man's bonds.

Louis Labournay rose to his feet and stretched himself with a sigh of relief.

"How happens it that you were made a prisoner by those men?" asked Dick.

"I'll tell you," was the reply. "From all I have been able to learn through hearing those men talk since having been made a prisoner by them, I think that in some manner they discovered that I was a secret agent of the French Government, sent over here to confer with the patriots. I think further, that they discovered at the same time and in the same way, that I was to receive a messenger from the commander-in-chief of the patriot army, and they concocted the clever scheme of making me a prisoner and receiving the messenger in my stead. Did not one of them profess to be Louis Labournay?"

"He did," replied Dick; "and I believe you are right in your suspicions. What are those men? They do not look like redcoats."

"I think they are what you Americans call Tories."

"I judge you are right. How happens it, though, that you speak so freely to us. Might we not be Tories also?"

The Frenchman smiled.

"Since having taken a good look at you," he remarked, quietly, "I have recognized you as being Dick Slater, the brave American boy spy, of whom so much has been said. I have been in New York several months, and have seen you twice before this."

"Ah! that explains it," said Dick.

"And you are messengers sent by the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, are you not?"

"Yes; we are messengers from General Washington; and we have important papers which we are to place in the hands of Mr. Louis Labournay."

"That is myself," the man said. "Ah! it would have been bad, bad! if the scheme of those Tories had succeeded. It would have been a terrible affair had those papers fallen into their hands!"

"I was suspicious of them from the very first," said Dick. "Somehow I had my doubts that the man who claimed to be Louis Labournay was really that individual. So, instead of delivering the papers into his hands, I told him I had a verbal message to deliver and had been instructed not to deliver it until to-morrow morning."

"Bravo!" exclaimed Louis Labournay. "That was a bright thought!"

"Come," said Dick; "we will go down and see how our prisoners are getting along."

The three made their way downstairs to the next floor below, and to the room in which the prisoners had been left.

A surprise awaited them there.

The prisoners were gone!

That they had not escaped unaided was evident, for their bonds had been cut with a knife.

They could not have done this themselves.

"It is as I have thought," said Louis Labournay; "there has been a traitor among my servants, and he it was who admitted those men in the first place, when they made a prisoner of me, and he has now completed his work, by freeing the scoundrels and letting them escape!"

This proved to be the case.

It was found on investigation that the butler was missing. He had admitted the two Tories, three evenings before, and they had made Louis Labournay a prisoner, and

then boldly remained in the house. The butler had told the other servants that these two men were relatives of Labournay's, and that they were to remain there till M. Labournay returned, he having been suddenly called away.

Dick delivered the important papers into Louis Labournay's hands.

The youths remained till morning, and as they were bidding their host good-by, Dick remarked:

"That was certainly a clever scheme of the Tories, but it failed, nevertheless."

"Thanks to you!" said Louis Labournay, earnestly.

THE END.

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